

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
June 25, 2013 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office

Others present:

Daniel H. Laudenslayer, Tarson LLC
Miguel A. Herrera, Milan Consulting Group
Donald A. Borden, Quercus Studio LLC
Jeffrey Charlesworth, Quercus Studio LLC
Brendan Jones, Sweet Street Desserts Inc.
Kent D. Morey, Spotts Stevens & McCoy Inc.
Dennis C. Kohl, Carpenter Technology Corporation
David S. Johnson, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the June meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Burket moved to accept the June 25th agenda. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the June agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Iglesia Cristiana – final land development plan [0:00.35]

Mr. Laudenslayer believed the required revisions were made, and said Public Works determined that no appreciable changes in sewage flows would result from the projected occupancy. He suggested a conditional plan approval. Mr. Miller agreed, reminding that if a framework for an eventual municipal-improvements agreement can be prepared, to the satisfaction of the Solicitor, the plan could be recorded, and the surety posted after the church raises enough funds to proceed with construction.

Mr. Burket moved to grant the final plan approval, conditioned on the revisions requested by the Planning Office and Public Works Department. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to grant final approval to the Iglesia Cristiana plan.

Resolution #19-2013

Café Terrace (Sweet Street Desserts) – final land development plan [0:05.02]

Being ahead of the agenda schedule and waiting for additional representatives, Carpenter Technology Corporation deferred to Sweet Street Desserts.

Mr. Borden described a 747-square-foot outdoor deck expansion of the existing café, and noted the provision for waivers of small projects, wondering if it had been determined to qualify. Mr. Miller felt that it did, but for its impact to public infrastructure. In this case, the development encroaches on a large stormwater pipe/easement in the front of the property, as have several projects by Sweet Street Desserts. He said the Public Works Department had already signaled their satisfaction with the intended design solution. He suggested they present the plan for the Commission's benefit and opportunity to comment. Mr. Jones explained that an expansion of the café is somewhat constrained by the space available and the needs of the production facility. He said what began as an outlet has become a bigger attraction, often exceeding its seating accommodation. He said the deck design was inspired by The High Line park on the lower west side of Manhattan (a linear, elevated greenway on a former New York Central Railroad spur), and some of the people involved in that project lent their experience. Mr. Charlesworth described an addition, both on-grade and cantilevered, creating a 'floating' effect about three to five feet above the landscaping. He said the shape of deck itself, and the combination of seating arrangements lends some aesthetic interest. The landscaping specified will create year-round interest and color. Improvements to the existing entrance are also proposed, including a lift for an accessibility upgrade. A low-profile, stainless steel cable railing will provide edge protection without blocking views. Seasonal 'shade sails' will provide shade over some parts of the deck. Medium-sized flowering trees, perennials and ornamental grasses will front and frame the addition. Mr. Jones, head chef and manager of the café, mentioned the inclusion of an herb garden. Mr. Borden

explained that stormwater will be managed by a subsurface infiltration system, with an overflow outlet to the public storm sewer system. Mr. Charlesworth said the same architect and geotechnical engineer responsible for the 2010 “R&D Building Addition” are evaluating the interface with the storm sewer, and are prepared to satisfy the City Engineer with load transfer beams if deemed necessary. Mr. Borden noted that they had received zoning approval earlier that day. Mr. Lauter asked about the appearance and effect of the deck from the perspective of Hiesters Lane. Mr. Charlesworth explained that the recessed, block wall supporting it would be painted black and, with the prescribed landscaping, would serve to screen the underside and create the floating effect. He added that the grasses will stand up through the winter. Asked about the decking material, Mr. Charlesworth answered “exposed aggregate concrete”, with a custom color palette and other effects from the tile work and the furniture. Mr. Jones characterized the effort as a great extension of the business and its marketing. Mr. Miller affirmed his recommendation for a waiver of the full land development process, on the one condition that they provide an update of the final plan, as the design is finalized, for the City’s records. He said it need not delay the construction permitting.

Mr. Burket moved to waive the formal land development process for Sweet Street Desserts, conditioned on the Planning Office’s request for the final ‘civil’ planning details. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to waive ‘land development’ for the Café Terrace project, based on the Commission’s resolution of March 20, 1998 (No. 8-98) exempting certain building additions based on size and impact. Mr. Miller returned the application fee. Mr. Jones offered bakery ‘samples’.

Resolution #20-2013

New Wire Cleaning Line Building 154 (Carpenter) – final land development plan [0:36.07]

Mr. Morey described the intended location on Carpenter Technology Corporation’s ‘west shore’ property, just south of Building 129 (the tallest when viewed from the Warren Street Bypass). He said that at about thirty feet tall, and tucked in among existing buildings, it won’t be visible from any public ways, and will be built over existing macadam surfacing. Continuing his description of the property, he identified Building 48 to the west, where the existing equipment and lines are housed, Building 73 to the south and west, which will share walls in common, and Building 94 to the east, with a portico for deliveries of material. He hoped to have the air-quality permits in late August, and didn’t expect to be in a position for approval until then. He said the operation requires four employees per shift, all from the existing work force, such that no additional off-street parking or sewage-loading provisions are necessary. He mentioned some storm sewer and grading issues yet to be resolved. Mr. Miller said he didn’t have much to add, likening it to previous Carpenter projects. He suggested the Commission address the waiver requests, which appear to match those granted to the earlier projects. They concern requirements for boundary information and zoning (‘area and bulk’) calculations. He referred to other plans on-file showing the full layout of Carpenter’s properties, and recommend granting the waivers. He said the plan should be tabled for the procedural reasons mentioned, and asked that Carpenter consider relieving the Commission of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code deadline if something postpones their August estimate. Mr. Kohl said another manufacturing process will remain in Building 48, the freed space used to improve it and the movement of material within. Mr. Miller asked if Carpenter had any concern the tight fit would limit emergency access. Mr. Kohl thought not, except for the area against Building 73 where the buildings meet. He explained that the alley between Buildings 73 and 48 will remain, and the portico (also meant to protect cleaned product from precipitation) will be high enough. He added that a new retaining wall will widen an existing lane for two-way traffic, though it dead-ends at south end of the building.

Mr. Burket moved to table the final plan, but grant the waivers requested, consistent with those previously granted. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to table Carpenter’s Building 154 final plan, and waive §§22-402.4.F, -402.4.H, -402.4.K, 402.4.L.1 and -403.1.B of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Mr. Morey confirmed that Carpenter will extend the Planning Code’s time limits, if necessary.

Resolution #21-2013

Other business:

review the draft May 28, 2013 meeting minutes [0:49.57]

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the May meeting minutes. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the May 28th meeting minutes.

Resolution #22-2013

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the June meeting. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the June 25th meeting. – 7:51p